

*Taylor 31*  
A  
Funeral Sermon,

Occasioned, by the

Sudden Death

Of the Reverend

Mr. Nathanael Vincent,

L A T E

Minister of the Gospel in *Southwark.*

*12.*

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By NATHANAEL TAYLOR.

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L O N D O N,

Printed for John Lawrence at the *Angel* in the *Poultry*, and Thomas Cockeril at the Corner of *Warwick-lane*, in *Pater-Noster Row*. 1697.

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THE LANCET  
V. 10. 1851

[REDACTED]

To that part of the Church of Christ  
in Southwark, of which the Re-  
verend Mr. NATHANAEL  
VINCENT was Pastor.

Beloved in our Lord,

**T**Is commonly and justly esteemed an Instance of the Wisdom and Goodness of God, that the Dispensation of the Gospel is committed to those who are of the same Make and Frame with the People to whom they Preach. But that which is a Happiness in one respect, is a disadvantage in another, viz. That tho' they are never so Eminent and Useful, they must Dye as well as their Hearers: As it was in the Mount of old, tho' Christ himself remain with his Disciples, (and will do so even to the end of the World) yet Moises and Elias, tho' Excellent Prophets, and glorious Creatures, must withdraw, and sometimes vanish in a Moment.

Of this you have a sad instance in the surprizing Death of your beloved Pastor, which was the Occasion of the following Sermon, the Design whereof is to quiet your Minds under, and quicken you to improve so awakening a Providence by a diligent Preparation for your own Decease.

I am the rather encouraged to expect, that this, which is the main Scope of it, will be complied withall, because many of you did immediately and readily in several Instances follow the advice which I gave you, (and which you may here find) in the Close thereof.

## The Epistle Dedicatory.

Your so doing gives me great hopes, that you will de-  
mean your selves as you ought, towards a Successor, when  
he shall be settled among you; as you have done towards  
him who is removed from you. I have often heard him  
speak with great pleasure, of the many Testimonies you  
have given, of a more than ordinary affection to him.  
Indeed it would have been strange, if it had been otherwise,  
because he could use the Apostle's endearing Argument with  
1 Cor. 4.  
15. a great many of you, Though you have ten thousand  
Instructors in Christ, yet you have not many Fathers; for  
in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel.

But the great Proof and Tryal of you will be, when  
another who hath not that additional Advantage, shall  
enter into his Labours, and build upon that Foundation which  
this Wise Master-Builder hath laid, and so successfully  
carried on among you.

Give me leave to put you in remembrance, tho' you can-  
Heb. 13. 7. not but know it already, that you are not to govern, but  
13. to be Ruled, as well as Taught by him; not to Trample  
on him, but to Submit your selves to him; not lightly  
to esteem him, but shew him double Honour in Love for  
his Works sake; and out of respect to him whom he shall  
Represent. For a Faithful, Ordained Minister, is not  
the People's Creature, but an Embassador of Christ;  
1 Cor. 5.  
20. his Gift from Heaven to the Church, and a Great Bless-  
Eph. 4. 11. ing to those over whom he doth Preside.

That the God of Wisdom and Order would direct you  
to pitch upon such a One, and Treat him as such, with  
one Common Consent; and by prospering his Labours a-  
mong you, build you up in Faith, Holiness and Comfort to  
Eternal Life, is and shall be the Earnest Prayer of

Your Servant for Jesus sake,

Nathanael Taylor.



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# Funeral Sermon, &c.

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LUKE XII. 40.

*Be ye therefore ready also: For the Son of Man  
cometh at an Hour when ye think not.*

**O**ur Blessed Saviour having Preached an Excellent Sermon, full of very Serious Advice, in many Particulars, of which you have an Account in the foregoing Verses of this Chapter; for the better Fastening of the whole upon his Hearers, he falls in the Close of it, upon a Subject of a very Affecting and Moving Nature, namely, the approaching Day of *Judgment*, and the Necessity of living in the Continual Expectation of, and making daily Provision for it. This he enters upon in the 35<sup>th</sup>. Verse of the Chapter, and prosecutes to this 40<sup>th</sup>. Verse, which I have now read unto you, wherein you have these four Things observable:

1. The Duty that he presses upon his Hearers, *Be ye ready.*
2. A Strong Motive to back and enforce it: *For the Son of Man cometh at an Hour when ye think not.*

*The Son of Man cometh:* 'Tis that more Eminent and Famous Coming of Christ, to judge the World at the last Day, which is here plainly meant. But under this, is comprehended also the Day of a Man's *Death*; For so you shall find the

B

Scripture

Scripture uses this Expression, *Philip. 1. 10. That you may be sincere, and without Offence till the Day of Christ: 1 Tim. 6. 14. Keep this Commandment till the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.* These *Philippians* and *Timothy* have been dead many Ages since, and yet the Day of Christ is not come, he hath not yet appeared: How therefore is this to be understood? 'Tis meant of the Day of their *Death*; and so the Scripture words it, because the Day of every particular Man's *Death*, and the Day of the Universal Judgment, is to him in Effect one and the same; his *State* is as truly, and as fully determined thereupon, as it will be when Christ shall come to judge the World; no Alteration can possibly be made in it after we are once dead: As to *that*, such as we are when we leave this World, such shall we be when we come to stand before the Bar of Christ at the last Day, to receive our Unchangeable Sentence.

And as this Coming of Christ is *Certain*, so many times 'tis a very sudden thing too; *The Son of Man cometh*, that is, Death and Judgment come in an hour when you think not.

3. The Persons here spoken to: Who they are, you may learn from *Peter's* Question, in the Verse immediately following my Text; wherein, says he, *Lord, speakest thou this Parable to us, or even to all?* And from our Lord's Answer, wherein he continues this Discourse of his, and particularly applies it to the *Wise and Faithful Rulers and Stewards* in his House. So that the best of his *Ministers* are as much concerned in it, as any of the Family; they are as liable to a *Sudden Summons* by Death and Judgment, as any of their Hearers; and 'tis as much their Interest, yea more, because of the heavier Account they have to make, to be *Always ready* for it.

4. The Connexion of these Words with the Fore-going Verse, *Be ye therefore ready also.* Which suggests another Motive to our Thoughts. In the preceding Verse our Saviour had represented the Suddenness of his coming, by the similitude of a *Thief*, who sets upon a House unexpectedly in the Night, which if the Owner thereof had known of, he would certainly have watched, and not have suffered it to have been broken open. And then comes in my Text, *Be ye therefore ready also*: q. d. If Men are so prudent and careful, that they be not surprized in Matters of a lower Nature, where the utmost that they can lose is their *Worldly Substance*, and their

their Temporal Lives; how much more should they be so in a matter of the highest Concern, whereupon their Souls, their Everlasting Welfare, their *All* does depend? And therefore be ye ready in this case also; for the Son of Man cometh in an hour when ye think not.

From the Words thus divided and opened, I shall raise this Doctrine, as the Subject of my present Discourse.

*Doct. Seeing Death and Judgment may suddenly and unexpectedly seize upon any, even the best of Men and Ministers, therefore every Man should be always ready for them.*

In the managing this Point, I shall do these four Things.

1. I shall say somewhat to *Vindicate and Justify the Providence of God, in the sudden and unexpected Death of Good Men and Ministers.*

2. Shew you wherein this *Readiness for Death and Judgment* doth consist.

3. Set before you the force of the Argument, from the *Suddenness of them, to be always ready.*

4. Apply the whole.

1. I shall say somewhat to *Vindicate and justify the Providence of God, in the sudden and unexpected Death of good Men and Ministers.* And this is requisite, because such thoughts as these, upon such Occasions, are apt to arise in our Minds. "For a *Vile* Person indeed to be *Driven away* in his Wickedness, like "Chaff and Smoak before the Wind, in those Storms which "his own Sins have raised, may be easily accounted for; but "that very *Holy Men*, in the height of their Usefulness, and "in the midst of their Work, should be snatcht away almost "in the same manner, seems at first View to be very strange "and severe. Their *Enemies* will be apt to censure and reproach them, and look upon this as a *Black Mark* from Heaven upon them; and their *Friends* cannot but bitterly bewail "it. For had Death made its Regular and Leisurely advances, "they might have had many an Opportunity of speaking in "Commendation of the Ways of God and Religion, from their "own Experience, and of giving suitable Advice and Counsel "to us; and the *Last Words* of our dying Husband or Father,

of

" of our *dying* Friend or Pastor, would to be sure have made  
" very deep and lasting Impressions upon us, and have been of  
" mighty Life and Service to us all our Days. Why therefore,  
" O why, did God deal so unkindly with him and us, as to *hurry*  
" him away from us in so *hasty* a manner, as hardly to suffer  
" him to speak one Word, when he took his Everlasting Fare-  
" well of us?

By way of Reply to all this, I have these five or six Things to offer.

1. Consider the *Absolute Sovereignty and Dominion of God.*

Rev. 3. 7. This Divine Attribute is displayed when he closeth his right Hand to hide these Stars, wherein they were formerly held; or when he seals them up in a Sudden and so thick a Darkness, that

Job 9. 7. we can neither see them, nor receive any further Influences from them. And if we had nothing else to urge in the Case, even this alone were enough to stop all our Mouths. Shall we not allow God that which we challenge to our selves, to *Do with*

Pf. 46. 10. *his own what he pleaseth?* Be still, and know that I am God. And the Exercise of this Attribute about Good Men, even when it seems to bear a little *hard* upon them, should least of all be regretted by us; because it has been employed about them in vastly greater Instances, so much for their Advantage. For it was Divine *Sovereignty* that selected them out of the Common Mass of Mankind, when others were passed by, and Crowned them with all those Gifts and Graces wherein they did excel. Now if the same Hand that framed them into Vessels of Honour, break them in pieces with one single stroke, it becomes us to bow our Heads, and humbly adore him, crying out, *How*

Rom. 11. *unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past our finding out,*  
33. who yet *Worketh all things according to the Counsil of his own*  
Eph. 1. 11. *Will!*

2. God orders it thus, That Men may not judge of his Love or Hatred by meer external Providences. This is a deceitful Beam, at which we are very prone to weigh Men and Things; but hereby God gives us a plain and sensible Proof of the Truth of that Scripture, that *All things come alike to all, and there is one Event to the righteous and to the wicked.* The best Rule whereby to form our Judgments as to this point, is from the manner of Men's Lives, and not from that of their Death: And that the suddenness of their Departure alone, is no Black Mark from Heaven against

against them, is very plain, from this convincing Demonstration, that there shall be Saints alive at that very hour wherein Christ shall appear to judge the World, who shall be suddenly *Changed, and Caught up in the Air, to meet him in a moment, in the twinkling of an Eye.*

1 Thel. 4  
17.  
1 Cor. 15.  
52.

3. God orders it thus, *Because he would prevent the Prayers of his People, for the prolonging such a Man's Life when his Day is come.* Such a Value has God for his People, and their Prayers, that he would not have them wrestle with him, for what he intends not to grant; and therefore when Wrath is determined against any, and there is no Remedy, he is wont in a great measure to restrain the Spirit of Prayer, and take off the Hearts of his People from interceding for them. But it neither is, nor can, nor ought to be so with them, when the Life of an Eminent *Useful Christian or Minister* is in apparent danger; such a one is always very Dear and Precious to them; they would, as the *Galatians* for *Paul*, *Pluck out their very Eyes for him*; much more will they pour out their Souls to God in his Behalf: The Church would do by him, if *the Lord's Prisoner* by a lingering Sickness, as they did by *Peter* when he was *Herod's*; *Prayer was made to God for him without ceasing.* Now when such a Man's Work is done, and his determined Time run out, God suddenly removes him; that he may not give leisure to the People to lay hold on his Arm, and endeavour to prevent that Blow, which he is resolved to give.

Gal. 4. 15.

Act. 12. 5.

4. God does this *as an Act of Favour and Kindness to the Good Man himself.* Hereby he is effectually preserved from many of those Evils, wherewith some of the Saints of God, who have more *slowly* gone off from the Stage of this World, have been sorely distressed. As,

1. *The Great Pains and Anguish of a long and tedious Sickness:* This darkens the Mind, shatters the Judgment, breaks the Spirit, stokes and binds down the Soul to a continual, sad Meditation on the Misery it feels, making a Man pine away in the bitterness of his Soul from Morning unto the Evening.

It indisposes a Man for any Duty, even that of a *Delightful Communion with God in Private*; hinders his Activity in it, and quickly diverts him from it. Alas, they are but a few *Fragments* only that we can then present our God withal; a few,

most broken Petitions, that we can offer up to him; and those also with much adoe; dart up a Prayer to Heaven one Minute, and fetch a long Groan the next. The Sense of our pressing Evils will be like a Clog or a Weight, to hinder the flight of our Souls towards Heaven, check them when they are mounting, and presently pull them down again. When God from Morning even to Night is breaking his Bones like a Lion, even Hezekiah himself can but *Chatter like a Crane, or a Swallow, or mourn like a Dove; O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me.* When the Instrument, the Body is thus out of Tune, and its Strings slackned or broken, the most Skillful Artist can't make that Melody before the Lord, as at other times he doth.

Isa. 38. 13,  
14.

Besides this is a strong Temptation to Impatience, to Jealousies, to hard and suspicious Thoughts of God. When he thus smites us, the best of us betray too much of Opposition to his good Will, and too strong an Affection to our own Ease.

Further, sharp and long Bodily Pains, often prove the Occasion even to Good Men, of great inward Trouble and Distresses of Soul. David's Sickness often cast him into great Doubts and Fears about his Sin, that God had not forgiven them. Indeed all his Grievs springing from other causes, at last did run into this Channel, as any Disemper turns to the Plague in the Time of a Raging Pestilence. The troubles of my

Pf. 29. 17,  
18.

Heart (saith he) are enlarged, I am desolate and afflicted. But what was the Reason of this? he lay under Affliction and Pain, and that caus'd many desponding Thoughts about the Pardon of his Sins.

A sudden Dispatch to a Prepared Soul is a Favour more Eligible, than to be continued a long while upon such a Rack.

The *Cherubim* of *holy* a solemn and formal Earthell of *Angels* and *Heavenly* and *Heavenly* which is very unpleasant at all times, but more especially in some cases.

As for Instance, When a Good Man considers the Difficulties, and the *Strait* where he shall leave him. This was the Case of *Belshazzar* though he had the *Colonne* of God, yet he stood and rich as he was at his death, yet he was supported by his *Angels* the *Sinking* Spirit, yet he knew of the how the *Angels* in the *Good* Men's Eyes, at the Thoughts of

of



Of those Calamities which he forelaw were coming upon his Children, after his approaching Decease. And this is very plain from the Beginning and Ending of that Verse, in the 2 Sam. 23:5. *Although my House be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for I will all my Desire, and all my Salvation, although he may be slow to promise.* He begins the Verse with these Words, *Although my House be not so with God*, that is, not as the light of the Morning when the Sun riseth, even a morning without Clouds, as he expresses it in the beginning of the foregoing Verse; but many a sad Providence will overshadow it, and darken the Glory of it. And then he ends the Verse with these Words, *Although he make it slow to promise*, that is, not so Spring as the tender Grass out of the Earth, by clear shining after the Rain; as he expresses it in the latter End of that 4th. Verse; but my Family will wither away, like the Grass of the Field, when burnt up by the Heat of the Sun. Hereby he evidently shows, that the Distresses that were coming upon his Family made a deep Impression upon him, cut him to the quick, and created some very uneasy thoughts in his Mind, as he lay a Dying. Another Occasion, wherein this taking our solemn Farewell is so very uneasy a thing, is, when our Friends cannot resign us up without the Indecent Workings of a Violent and Passionate Sorrow. A thing that Paul himself could not bear, to whom the Weeping of his Friends was more grievous than any Death that he could endure from the Hands of his most Enraged Enemies: And therefore he that was Ready not to be bound only, but also to dye at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus; cries out, *What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart: As tho' he could better endure the shedding of his own Blood, than the pouring out of their Tears.*

Act. 21. 13.

3. The 3rd. *Distressing of Satan.* He is very busy about the Death-Beds of good Men, and more especially may we suppose him ready at such a time to fall with a greater Degree of Fury and Malice, upon an Eminent Minister, whose Business it has been all his Life long to batter and destroy his Kingdom. When such a one retreats slowly out of the Field, the Enemy hath the fairer Opportunity, and being animated with Revenge, will be sure to summon up all his force, and draw his Bow with his

his full strength, to shoot his most envenomed Arrows against him. 'Tis a Mercy to be carried away into that Heaven, into which he can never enter, in so *swift* a manner, that he shall not be able to fling one of his fiery Darts after us, to wound, or so much as to affright us in our Passage thither.

For my own part, on mature Deliberation, I don't think it a desirable thing for a good Man, who is *ready*, to be worn away like a Stone, by a *long and continual Dropping*. May my House and Soul be in order, and then the sooner it quits this Vile Body, and leaves this wretched World, if in the twinkling of an Eye, so much the better. To which there is but one Circumstance more, which I should desire may be added, *viz.* that I may dye *Preaching the Everlasting Gospel, or Administring the Lord's Supper*. May my Taper be blown out *in the Sanctuary*, and may I presently pass in an Instant from Serving the Church Militant here on Earth, to joyn with the Church Triumphant in Heaven. But we must not be our own Choosers; and to be sure God will dispose all things in the best manner for them that are his.

5. God orders this, as a Punishment to surviving Friends and Relations. When he sends long Sicknels, he weans our Hearts from them by degrees, gives us time and leisure to get our Souls into a readiness for parting with one another, (though even then too it is hard work for the most of us.) This is like digging about the Roots of a Tree, loosning and preparing of it for a more easie fall: But a very Sudden Death, is like the violent blowing of it down with a Whirlwind, which tears up the ground along with it, and makes a gap so wide, that it is not easily filled up again.

6. And Lastly, God does this for the Instruction of others. We think, that if a Holy Man had but time and leisure given him, his dying Words would have a great influence upon us: And I grant there is *something* in it; and they must needs have very impenetrable Souls, that should not be at all affected with his last Speeches. But when God *hastily* snatches away a good Man, Providence it self turns Preacher, and cries with a loud Voice, and the Man of Wisdom will hear, and learn; and he who does not do so, would not be made better, not only though the Preacher had taught him with his dying Breath, but tho' he

he should rise again from the Dead to warn him. For,

1. This is an awakening Consideration to us, to use great Diligence in doing good to, and receiving good from our Friends and Relations, while their Lives and ours do last. With what Care and Diligence should Parents and Ministers instruct their Children, and their Flock, Watch over them, Warn, Reprove, Exhort, Beseech, Counsel and Comfort them, Travel in Birth with them, till Christ be formed in their Hearts; endeavour to bring them into, keep and quicken them in the ways of God, and prepare them for Heaven, as not knowing how soon Death, that great Silencer of Ministers, whom none can resist, may so effectually stop their Mouths as not to suffer them to Preach their Farewell Sermon, or utter one single Sentence for the good of those whom they leave behind them.

With what readiness and thankfulness should Children and People listen to their Instructions, receive their Reproofs, hearken to their Warnings, shew them that Honour that is due to them for their Works sake; not only rejoicing, but walking in the light, while they enjoy it, as not knowing how soon either one, or the other, or both, may be in the Grave, where the Voice of the Preacher is not heard, no more than that of the Oppressor. It is but a Melancholly thing, to have that Scripture fulfilled upon us, *The day is coming, when you shall desire to see one of the Days of the Son of Man, and shall not see it.* Job. 3. 18. Luk. 17. 22.

2. It is a loud Call to Repentance, for our Non-improvement of those Advantages we enjoyed whilst such Relations were continued to us. Such is our Folly, that we seldom duly value, or rightly use any Mercy while we possess it, which gives but too much cause for deep Remorse of Spirit when we are deprived of it. 'Tis true indeed, no Man can weep his Father, his Friend, his Pastor out of the Grave. Our Loudest Cries will not awaken them that are fallen asleep in Jesus; nor can our Sighs infuse a new Breath into them, whose Spirits are departed. But what cannot profit them may be of great Advantage to our selves. And so it will be if our Grief run in the right Channel; if our unsuitable Carriage towards them be deeply laid to heart, as it ought to be, when our Sins have been the Occasion of cutting down the Spreading Tree, because we sat idly under its Shadow, and did not stretch out our

our hands, to gather the good Fruit wherewith it was laden.

3. 'Tis a proper Means to Cure our inordinate Affection to, and Dependence upon surviving Friends, and all Wordly Comforts. *Isa. 2. 22.* Cease ye from Man, whose Breath is in his Nostrils; whence it easily passes out, or where it may be presently Rapt by any little matter, and therefore, Wherein is he to be accounted of? Hereby we see, these Pipes may soon be cut off, these Springs be presently dried up; and therefore, because at the utmost the Time is short, and may be much shorter than we are aware, it remaineth that both they that have Wives, be as tho' they had none; and they that weep, as tho' they wept not; and they that rejoice, as tho' they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as tho' they possessed not; and they that use this World, as not abusing it, for the fashion of this World passeth away.

4. 'Tis a plain Admonition, that our Time and Life are in God's hands. Sometimes indeed they are said to be in our own; *Judg. 12. 3.* put my Life in my hand, said Jephthah; *My Soul is continually in my hand,* saith David. But then hereby is meant the great Dangers to which our Lives are perpetually exposed; as a brittle Glass, which may presently be broken by slipping from him that carelessly holds it; or a valuable thing, that may be easily snatched away from him that shews it in his open hand. But as to Dominion and Power, so our times are in God's hand alone, he prolongs or shortens them as he sees fit, and no man hath Power over his own Spirit, (much less over that of his Brother) so that in one moment when he calls for it. The most high doth what he will in the Army of Heaven; and among the Inhabitants of the Earth, and none can stay his Hand, as the proudest of Kings acknowledged, when his Reason returned to him; and so shall we except our be deplored from us. *Pf. 49. 7.* *Dan. 4. 35.* 36. It is a sensible Evidence of the Frailty and Uncertainty of our Lives, That the best of Men, in their best Estate, are but as the Flower of the Field, which, as gawdy as it looks, if a Wind do but pass by it, immediately it is gone. *Pf. 103. 16.* What Stupidity is it to lavish away one Day or Hour, which for ought we know may

may be our last; and then there's no Preparation to be made for Eternity. We stand upon bottom ground, which may presently fall in, and therefore *Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it* Eccles. 9. *with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the Grave, whither thou goest.*

7. It is a mighty Check to Carnal Security, and pleasing our selves with the hopes of a long Continued Happiness in this World. This is but too natural to us all, when we are in flourishing Circumstances. They that lye at Ease are very Subject to such idle Dreams. That rich Man in the Gospel, was not the only Person that ever said to himself, *Soul, thou hast Goods laid up for many years, Eat, Drink, and be merry.* And how like a Fool did he look, *When God said unto him, This Night shall thy Soul be required of thee?* David himself was so over-teen, that He said in his prosperity he should never be moved. But Providence soon confuted him, and his Mountain which he thought stood so strong, was presently moved and shaken to that Degree, that he himself was suddenly cast from it within a Hairs Breadth of the Grave; whereupon he immediately adds, *What profit is there in my Blood, when I go down to the Pit, shall the Dust praise thee?* When others drop in this manner before our Eyes, 'tis a lively Comment on that Scripture, *Go to now ye that say, to day or to morrow, we will go into such a City, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow:* (Thou may'st travel to thy long Home before thou reach that City.) *For what is your Life? It is even a Vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanissheth away.* And therefore, Ye ought to say, *If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that:* But now ye rejoyce in your Boastings, please your selves with such vain Thoughts and Projects; *All such rejoycing is evil:* 'Tis a sottish Thing so to do, for you are not Lords of your own Lives, and therefore not of your own Actions; and if your Breath fail, in that moment all these great Thoughts of yours, shall perish like a proud and swelling Bubble that is broken by a single puff of Wind.

8. Third strong Motive to Thankfulness to God, that he hath not suspected you in your Natural State, or in the very Act of some Sin and Fault, to a mighty Affront put on your Thoughts and Spirits into a mighty Ferment, and Agitation, which makes



our Wrath immediately kindle, like an heated Vapour, by its own Motion, in a sultry Evening; and we are apt to be quick and severe in avenging our selves on our Adversaries, if it be in the Power of our hands. How easily could God have cut us off when we were Enemies to him; struck us down dead at his Foot in an Instant, when the Weapons of Iniquity were in our Hands, without affording us any leisure to bethink our selves what we had done, or whither we were going? Astonishing Patience, that he hath not long since torn away our guilty Souls from our Wretched Bodies, sending one to the Grave, and plunging the other into Hell: That his Wrath hath not *smoked* against us, yea, broke forth into a devouring *Flame*. His Forbearance is so much the more admirable, because perverse Man takes an Occasion from hence to Embolden himself in Sin. *Eccles. 8. 11. Because sentence against an Evil Work is not executed Speedily, therefore the Heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* His Power over himself is great as well as over us, otherwise his Anger had been let out like a Flood upon us, and we had been violently and hastily carried away before it.

9. And Lastly, 'Tis an evident Demonstration of the Necessity of our being continually in a prepared Posture for Death and Judgment. And this Naturally leads me to the

II. General propounded; which is, to shew wherein *this readiness for Death and Judgment* does lye.

This is twofold.

First, Habitual.

Secondly, Actual.

The one, as to the *State*; the other, as to the *Frame* of our Souls: The one, in Order to a *Safe* Departure, the other in Order to a *Comfortable* one.

1. There is an *Habitual Readiness* for Death and Judgment; which lyes in these two things, Justification by Faith in the Blood of Christ, and Sanctification by the Spirit of Christ.

1. Justification



1. *Justification by Faith in the blood of Christ.* He is a miserable Creature who has the guilt of any *one* Sin cleaving to his Soul, because that *single* guilt binds him over to Eternal Wrath. Who then can conceive the misery of that man, who has upon him the guilt of *all* those innumerable Sins which he has committed throughout the whole course of his life; *every one* of which, and much more *all* of them together, expose him to the Fury and Everlasting Vengeance of God? Such a one is far from being fit for Death and Judgment, who must fall under that condemning-Sentence, *Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* What terror and confusion will the very presence of Christ strike into the Souls of these men! *Joseph* had concealed himself from his Brethren a long while; but when at last he made himself known to them, and said, *I am Joseph*; the thought of those Injuries which they had done him, struck them dumb, and they were troubled at his presence, and could not answer him. When our Saviour shall appear, and say to an Unbeliever, *I am Jesus*; That Jesus, whose Blood thou hast despised, whose Gospel thou hast slighted, whose Spirit thou hast resisted, whose merciful Design thou hast opposed all thy life long, and wouldest not be reconciled to God through me, I am that very *Jesus*: These words will strike and pierce him to the very heart, and cause him to *wail*, and *call to the rocks and mountains*, saying, *Fall on me, and hide me from the face of him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?

Gen. 45. 3.

Rev. 1. 7.

Rev. 6. 16,

7.

2. *Sanctification by the Spirit of Christ.* The most glittering Profession, where there is not a work of Regeneration, will not avail in that day. The Foolish Virgins that had Lamps in their hands, but no Oil in their Vessels, will find the door shut against them when the Bridegroom comes, as not being ready to enter in with him. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. If we are not true Penitents and Converts, our Sins are not blotted out, but shall remain in God's Book against us under our respective Names; and then it will not be a time of refreshing, but of scorching Heat, which we shall never be able to endure.

Matth 25.  
10.

Acts. 3. 19.

In a word, There is not a more miserable Wretch out of Hell, than an unpardoned, and an unsanctified Man ; who is going to it, and considers not whither he is hasting. All this man's Happiness lies at *the mercy of a Disease, of an Accident, of one moment* ; for if *this night* God should take away his Soul, where is he ? Nay it all lies at the *mercy of one wise and sober thought* : For did he but understand and consider the true state of his Soul with reference to Eternity, his Mirth would be changed into Trembling, and all his Songs into Howlings and Lamentations, into Agonies and Horrors of Conscience : For 'tis not more certain that he is at present out of Hell, than it is, that if he live and die in his present State, he shall in a few moments be in it.

II. There is an *actual readiness* for Death and Judgment, and that lies in these following things.

1. *In a careful abstinence from every wilful Sin, and a speedy and deep repentance for any such, if we have been guilty of it. Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things, be diligent, that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*

2 Pet. 3.  
14.

Our principal care must be to *refrain from such Sins*. For *tho' Repentance* be a good thing, yet *Innocence* is better. Some men walk in a round, and a circle of sinning and repenting, repenting and sinning again : Their hearts seeming to be much divided between God and their Lusts. According as Conviction on the one hand, or Corruption awaken'd by Temptation on the other hand doth work in them ; they sometimes forbear their Sins, and at other times yield to them : As the tops of Corn that waver and incline this way or that, according as the force of the Wind doth bend and carry them. Now the Hearts of these men rise or fall with the change of their Condition, as the Quicksilver in a Weather-glass doth according as the surrounding Air is either bright and clear, or thick and foggy. A threatening Sickness doth as much alarm them, as the furious march of a powerful invading Army doth the weak and defenceless Inhabitants of any Country. Indeed, as the aking of one small part of our Bodies causeth more sensible grief and pain, than the sound and healthy state of all the rest doth of ease and pleasure ; so a few wilful Sins do cause more of terror in the Conscience, than a great many good

Actions

Actions are able to convey of support and comfort to it. And I dare appeal to the Experience of all sober men, when they are any thing serious, whether these are not the things that do *shake their confidence*, and make them jealous of themselves. So many wilful Sins as a man hath, of late especially, been guilty of, even after he hath repented of them, so many Arguments hath he to make him doubt of his own Sincerity; so many weights there are in the other Scale, that make the Balance at least to hang even, so that he hardly knows what to think of himself; and in a dying-hour his misgiving-Heart will be apt to say the worst, and reproach him that he hath not been right with God, nor found in his Statutes. And as *all* wilful sins must be diligently watcht against, so

In particular, Cruelty and Oppression must be avoided. *He shall* Jam. 2. 13.  
*have judgment without mercy, that sheweth no mercy.*

A rigid exacting those Debts which our poor Brother is not able to pay. *The Lord was wrath with that wicked servant that would* Matth. 18.  
*not forgive his fellow-servant a few pence, and commanded him to be* 33, 34-  
*delivered to the tormentors.*

Drunkenness, and Smiting of our Brethren. *If that servant shall* Luke 12.  
*say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the* 41.  
*men-servants, and maidens, and to eat and drink with the drunken;*  
*the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him,*  
*and in an hour when he is not aware.*

And it holds, not only as to these particular Sins, but as to all other wilful ones; as appears from what our Saviour adds, *And that Servant that knew his Master's Will, and prepared not* Verf. 47.  
*himself, neither did according to his Will (and much more if he*  
*knowingly went against it) shall be beaten with many stripes.*

2. In great diligence and readiness for the doing of every good work in its proper season; every Duty respecting either God, or our Selves, or our Neighbour: For a Christian is like a Clock or Watch that hath several distinct Motions; and as to every one of these, will the Judge examine us, when he shall appear. This is what our Saviour means, when he tells us, *our loyns should* Luke 12.  
*be girt about, in a posture ready for any Service that our Master* 35.  
*calls us to. And blessed is that Servant whom his Lord when he*  
*cometh shall find so doing. Seeing then that all these things shall be* 2 Pet. 3.  
*dissolved, what manner of Persons ought ye to be in all Holy Conver-* 11.  
*sation and Godliness!*

3. *In the lively exercise of every grace, as we have occasion for it, whether active or passive.* Some Graces are to be exercised every day, be our circumstances what they will, such as Faith in Christ, Love to God, and the like. Others are to be exercised under some peculiar circumstances, as the Providence of God gives us occasion, and a call thereunto; such as Patience, Submission to God, Faith in his Promises, &c. If need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold tribulations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than that of gold which perisheth though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. That is, either that you may be praised, and honoured, and glorified, as having given such evident proofs of the Sincerity of your Faith under very trying Providences; or else, that Christ in that day may be glorified, when your so noble Behaviour shall be displayed in the view of all the World, as the Fruit of his Death and Grace; and men shall see what excellent persons his Followers have shown themselves to be, through his strengthening of them, which will reflect an Honour upon him, as well as upon them. The Skill of the Artificer, and the Beauty of the Vessel will be both admired together.

1 Pet. 1. 7.

4. *In the diligent improving of every Talent for his Service, Life; Health, Strength, Reputation, Interest, Power, Authority, &c.* These are Talents which he hath committed to our Charge; and when he comes, he will strictly enquire what use we have made of them. And we know what became of the Unprofitable Servant: Those Feet which carried him to the place where he buried his Lord's Money, instead of walking with it to the Exchangers; and those Hands which were employed in concealing of it instead of trading with it, were bound; and for hiding it in the Earth, he himself was cast into Hell. What then will be the case of him who abuseth many of them, contrary to the intent for which they were given?

Heb. 10.  
38.

5. *In perseverance in Faith and Holiness to the last.* For if we draw back, his Soul will have no Pleasure in us. And how then shall we be able to look him in the Face? Deserters are wont to be more severely treated than those who were always open and professed Enemies. A sense of this hath come with so great a weight on some Backsliders in Judgment and Practice, as to break their Spirits, and sink them down into the Depths of Despair in the close

of

of their Days. Their awaken'd Consciences have lastt them with Whips of Steel, and with fiery Scorpions. And therefore, *Little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.* If Christ when he was a Prisoner, by one Look did so dash Peter out of Countenance, when in Words he disowned him, as to make him go forth immediately and weep bitterly; what overwhelmings-Sorrow and Confusion will his Majestick and angry Countenance strike all those into, who deny him in their Works, when he shall appear in all the Solemnity of a Publick Judge, in the Glory of his Father, surrounded with all his holy Angels!

6. *In a great weanedness from this World, and having our Affections strongly set upon Heavenly things.* Our Saviour plainly warns us, That too deep a concern about earthly matters, exposes men to a fatal Surprize by this great day. *Take heed (saith he) to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be over-charged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.* How bitter are the Thoughts, and much more the Approaches of Death to him whose Affections cleave strongly to this wretched World! Violence must be used to separate him from it. But he who sits loose to all things here below, is easily parted from them: Like the Beams of Light, which gently touch the Earth, but not being tied to it, are easily withdrawn from it, as soon as ever the Sun begins to set, and the Evening to come on.

7. *In getting our Evidences for Heaven bright and clear.* Abraham indeed, at the call of God, readily departs from his own Country into a Foreign Land, *not knowing whither he went.* But 'tis impossible any one should be willing to leave this World and pass into the other, if he be at a great loss in his own mind whither he is going, to Heaven or Hell, and which of these two must be his everlasting Habitation. Where Eternal Happiness or Misery is the Doubt, it must needs be a very uneasy thing to a serious Person (and men are generally so in their last minutes) to be tost up and down between Hopes and Fears. But when our Title to that blessed Inheritance is clear, and our Assurance is strong, we may chearfully lay down our Bodies and resign up our Souls. No man can live with half that Comfort and Joy as such a man may dye withal.

8. In

8. *In watching, waiting, and expecting Death and Judgment every day:* not fancying that certainly *we shall dye*; but thinking within our selves, that for ought we know *we may dye every day*. Frequently seasoning our Hearts with such serious Reflections as these, will be like a daily watering the Tree at the roots, which makes the Sap to rise and shoot up into every Branch, it will quicken us to the performance of all the forementioned particulars; and have the same good Influence upon us, as the expecting that Thieves may come every Night, which makes us careful to provide for our own Defence.

9. *In well settling your worldly Estates.* Do this in the time of Health, that it may be *your last Will*; *yours*, and not *the Will of those that are about you*, who otherwise may be practising upon you when you are sick and weak in Body and Mind too. The neglecting, or the not doing this to their own full Satisfaction, has caused very great uneasiness of mind in many, when they have been suddenly within the near Views of Death. We need not to have these worldly matters to distract and discompose us, when we have much weightier Affairs, enough to take up all the little remainder of our Time, and our most serious Thoughts. For,

Lastly, If our *Heads be clear*, and we have leisure, we must seriously *review the State of our own Souls*. Otherwise it will be as improper for us so to do, as it would for a man that is to make a Map of any Country, to pretend to survey it in a foggy day. In this case we must live upon, and draw Comfort from *the former Trials of our selves*. We must also *renew our Repentance* for all those particular Sins we can remember, and our Faith in the Blood of Christ for the pardon of them; and again *commit and give up our Souls to him*; recalling to our minds some of the *Promises of God*, that are most suitable to our present condition; speaking somewhat, if we are able, *in the behalf of God, and Christ, and serious Holiness*, that may be of use to those that we shall leave behind us; *lifting up our Hearts to the heavenly Glory, and commending our departing Spirits into the hand of God and Christ*.

III. *General.* I come to shew you wherein the force of this Argument lies, from *the suddenness of Death and Judgment*, to be *always ready for them*. And,

I. *Death*



1. *Death and Judgment will not stay beyond the appointed time, till we get ready.* Thy Days are numbred, thy Glas has been turned up, and running for some time; there are, it may be, but a few Sands more, how few God only can tell; and when they are run out, ready or unready all is one, away thou must. Now God gives thee Time, improve it, that *the long-suffering of God may be Salvation* to thee. But if thou trifle it away now, when the Decree is gone forth to cut down the barren Tree, it shall not stand a moment longer. Many a Time hast thou been sick, and the conscioufness of thy having made little or no Provision for Eternity, has made thee cry out in the bitterness of thy Soul, *O spare me a little longer!* God has been merciful to thee once and again; but the time is a coming, when he will be so no more. How many hast thou known of thy sinful Companions, who have cried as loudly as thou canst do, *Yet a little more time!* But God would not vouchsafe it, but they have been hurried away to Judgment before they have made up their Accounts:

2. *Little or nothing is to be done to get ready upon a sudden Surprise by Death.* Thou mayst be struck dead in a moment. Thy Disease may lye in thy Head, may so distract and cloud thy Brain, that as one well saith, if the meer saying, *Lord have mercy upon me*, would save thy Soul (as it will not) yet thou shalt not be able to utter so short a Petition. But suppose thou hast a little *longer warning*, how unlikely is it thou shouldest get thy Soul into a meet posture for Death and Judgment, if then it be to begin? When thou hast spent Forty or Fifty Years in Wickedness, is a few Hours time sufficient to make thy Peace with God for such a multitude of Provocations, or procure the Change of thy Heart and Nature, so confirmed in Sin? Soul and Body, by Physick and Pains are miserably indisposed for so serious a matter; and there is little hopes, that the Grace of God, which thou hast so long resisted, should then convert thee in a moment. It may be thy *Ignorance* will be so great, that having a clear sight of thy manifold and crying Sins, and little or no knowledge of a Saviour, thou wilt be at thy Wits-end, not knowing what to do. It may be God's *Spirit* will *withdraw*, and leave thee to the hardness of thy own Heart; and then thou wilt remain stupid as a Block: Or else the Thoughts

Thoughts of so many Sins, of the Terrors of God, the near Approaches of Death and Judgment, and amazing Fears of Hell, will cast thee into terrible Pangs and Agonies of Conscience, and overwhelm thee with a total Despair. Some such I have known, who upon their Sick and Death-Beds have cried out, *Undone, eternally undone, there is no Hope, no Mercy for us; there remaineth nothing but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation from the Lord to consume us*: Who have here-upon *howled like a Beast, and roared out like a damned Soul*; methinks I hear the *doleful Sound* continually in my Ears, and I hope I shall never totally forget it.

But for the present, let us suppose the *best*; Provided thou shouldest prove a *true Penitent* (which is very unlikely) yet, without a Divine Revelation thou wilt not be able to *know* it. Many have been affrighted by Sickness into seemingly very serious Purposes, and have been taken for sincere Converts; but when they have recovered, have returned again, like the Dog to his Vomit, and the Sow that has been washed to her wallowing in the mire. It may be this has been *thy own case*, a Fit of Sickness made a great change in thy *Countenance*, but a greater in *Thoughts*. But with thy Health thou hast recovered thy ancient *Looks*, and returned to thy *Old Sins* again; and all thy good Resolutions have vanished away like the *Visions of the Night* when a man awakes, or the *Dew of the Morning* when the Sun is risen. The Pangs thou hast undergone have not been like those of a *Woman in Travel*, which end in the Birth of a living Child; but like the racking and tormenting Pains of the *Gout or Stone*, which wear off, but no good comes of them. And who can assure thee that special Grace hath now fixed and established thy Heart, which hath so often started aside like a deceitful Bow? So that thou wilt unavoidably dye in a dreadful Cloud, and pass by the very Gates, and within a near View of the Flames of Hell, even though thou shouldest be received into Heaven.

3. *It will greatly torment thee, if Sickness should find thee unready.* Oh how wilt thou befooled and condemn thy self, and say, How often was I put in mind of such an Hour as this? How often have I been called upon to prepare my Soul for it? How often did I purpose to do it? I was even ready to yield sometimes, but still I deferred it till a more convenient Season (as I called it;) such

such a Fool was I, and so like a Beast have I carried it! Surely I had not the Understanding of a man within me.

4. *Great is the Happiness of those who are ready for a sudden Death.* Nothing can make them miserable; they walk in the Light of God's Countenance, Peace of Conscience, Joy in the Holy Ghost, and a daily delightful Communion with God; a thing so ravishing, that as that Nobleman said, when in his low condition he was tempted with the offer of a Bag of Gold to return to Popery, *Their Money perish with them that would not prefer one Hour's Communion with God before all the Silver and Gold in this World.* They drink abundantly of that sweet Wine, which hath a far more delicious relish and taste than all the Pleasures of this World, were the Spirits of them all extracted and mingled together in one Draught.

And as they do not *live*, so neither do they *dye* at the common rate of other men. Much of their *Master's Joy* comes down into them, before they are received up into it; they dye smiling, yea go away in Triumph into that blessed Place where Delight and Praise shall be their everlasting Work and Employment.

5. And Lastly. *The Consequences will be very dreadful, if thou art not ready.* If thou hast not the *habitual and fundamental* readiness, that is, if thou art not justified and sanctified, thou art lost for ever. And except these men's Consciences are scared, if a Cloud be but *gathering*, if some threatening Sickness do but hover over them, it casts them into a mighty Confusion: But if it actually *seize* them, they are in the same condition with *Belshazzar*, when he saw the Fingers of a man's hand writing he knew not what; tho' he could not read nor understand the mystical Character, yet his guilty Conscience concluded it was a Sentence of Death and Wrath; whereupon his *Thoughts troubled him*, and his *Knees smote one against another*; and his *Countenance changed white* as that *Wall* on which the Hand-writing appeared: And he could not be more in haste for his Wise-men, than they are for the Physician, to tell them what their Fate is like to be.

And though thou hast the Fundamental, yet if thou hast not the *actual* readiness for Death too, thou wilt be full of Fears and inward distress of Soul, dye very uncomfortably, and go away trembling into the other world.

## IV. And Lastly. The Application.

1. Learn hence the Reason of Holy Men's strictness in Religion. They dare not follow a multitude to do wickedly, nor assume to themselves so great a latitude in practice as their Neighbours. They *think*, and therefore they *walk* otherwise than the rest of mankind do. They take heed to their Feet, because they don't know but the next step they make may be into the other World. They have impressed upon their Minds a deep sense of those Words of our Saviour, *Behold I come as a Thief: Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*

Rev. 16. 15

2. How sad is it, that so few are, or take any care to get themselves ready? There is not a plainer instance of the deplorable Corruption and Folly of human Nature than this, That we stand in need of Divine Instruction by a powerful hand practically to know this common and obvious thing, *how frail we are.* God had pronounced that Severe Sentence against the Israelites, That that whole Generation should die in the Wilderness within less than forty Years. And consequently in so vast a body of men, who were all of them to drop in so short a compass of Time, they could not chuse but have daily Spectacles of Mortality before their Eyes; and yet Moses was jealous that not a man among them would duly apprehend so plain a thing without Help from Heaven; He therefore digests his own serious Thoughts on this Point into a solemn Prayer, for the use of the Israelites; that so he might lead the People in their Devotions; as well as in their Wars and Journeyings through the Wilderness. Yea, tho' he was so eminent a Saint, and so well skilled in all the Learning of the Egyptians, of which Arithmetick was one part; yet he saw a necessity of Divine Grace for himself too, that he might be able to reckon aright in this matter; which therefore he prays for in his own behalf as well as theirs, *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.*

Psa. 90. 12.

But the Folly of the generality of Mankind as to this point, is so very manifest, that we have too much cause to take up Moses's Complaint, That the Lord hath not given them a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day; which is a plain argument that he hath not been seriously applied

Deut. 29. 4

plied unto, nor his Instructions obediently complied withal. Our Saviour indeed in his Parable supposes the number of the Wise and Prepared, the Foolish and Unready Virgins, to be *equal*, five of the one, and five of the other: But surely in our days there is a vast disproportion between these two sorts of persons.

3. *Are you ready for Death and Judgment, yea or no?* Would not an immediate Summons to appear before the Bar of Christ, put you into as much Disorder and Confusion, as a sleepy and careless Army, by the sound of their Enemies warlike Instruments in the dead of the Night?

4. *Will you make it the great business of your Lives, from this time forward, to prepare for this day;* that you may not be surprized by it? To do this, is the Wisdom of *all*: But it would be a most unaccountable Folly in *some* men, if it should be neglected by them. *Ex. Gr.*

Those who have *weak and crazy Bodies*; and are frequently alarm'd by Sickness. If the Roof of the House be fallen, and the Floor be rotten, and several pieces of the Wall broken down, and the ragged Remains are visibly bowing and tottering every day, 'tis evident to our very Senses it cannot stand long.

Those who are *old*, whose *grey Hairs* make 'em look like Ears of Corn which are *white* and ripe for the Harvest.

Those who are the *Watchmen* of *Israel*, and whose business it is to awaken others; how inexcusable would they be, if they fall asleep themselves? Several of *our Order* of late have been *struck in the Pulpit*, and tho' they have languisht some days, never recovered the fatal Blow they there received. They have been like a Taper, which while 'tis burning and shining in the Candlestick, on a sudden drops down into the Socket, where it lies for a little time, shooting up its wavering and trembling Light, which is immediately suckt back again, and extinguisht in a few moments. That you may not be surprized by this last Enemy,

1. *Strengthen your Faith* about the coming of Christ, and be much in consideration of it, and the suddenness of it too.

2. Be often *putting Questions* to your selves, in a very serious manner; Am I ready indeed? What if I should dye before to morrow comes? O my Soul, art thou in such a Posture as thou art willing to be found in, when Christ shall appear.

Mr. Ken-  
tish,  
(both the  
Brothers.)  
Mr. Oker,  
Mr. Skewen  
of Coven-  
try,  
Mr. R.  
Mayo.

3. Shame your selves by considering *what care you use to be ready, and prevent a Surprise, in matters of a lower nature.*

4. Reflect upon your selves, *What Thoughts you had the last time you were Sick, and knew that you were unready, and were inwardly tormented in your minds at the Thoughts thereof.*

Lastly, *Improve the sudden Death of others to this end.* This is the Voice of that Providence, that so hastily removed your late excellent Pastor, Mr. Nathanael Vincent. I need not to tell you, How on Tuesday was sevensnight he was suddenly taken ill in the Morning, and had leisure only to say, *I find I am a dying; Lord, Lord, Lord, have mercy on my Family and Congregation.* So near did you his People lye to his Heart, even in his last Moments. Herein he resembled his and our common Lord, *who having loved his own, loved them even to the end.*

He was the Son of a Godly Minister, Mr. John Vincent; and a living Confutation of that Scandal, that the Children of the Prophets do more commonly than others prove Sons of Belial: As also was his late Brother, Mr. Thomas Vincent, a Minister of eminent Usefulness in London while he lived, especially in the time of the dreadful Plague, and whose Memory is still deservedly very dear and precious to those that knew him; like a Rose which adorns the Garden, and perfumes the Air while 'tis growing on the Tree, and hath a fragrant smell too a long time after it is gathered and dead. For he was a serious, humble, godly man, of sober Principles, and great Zeal and Diligence; as the incomparable Mr. Baxter doth truly describe him.

He was of such pregnant Parts, and so strong a Memory, that by the help of that, when he was but Seven years Old, he was wont for the ease of his tired Father, to repeat his Sermons in the Family in the Evenings of the Lord's Day. He was admitted as a Member of the Famous University of Oxford about the Eleventh Year of his Age, and went out Master of Arts about Eighteen; Preached publicly as a Lecturer at Pulborough in Sussex before Twenty; and at the Age of One and Twenty was Ordained and fixed as Rector of Langley-Marsh in Buckinghamshire.

After his Ejection, and a few years spent in a private Family, he came to this City the year after the Fire, and quickly settled among you in this Place. And this being the most publick Sphere

Mr. Baxter's Life.  
Part 3<sup>d</sup>.  
p. 95.



Sphere wherein he moved, let us *briefly* consider him as a Minister, and as a Christian (for I shall not draw him at his *full length*).

1. As a *Minister*. He had a good share of *Learning*, and other Ministerial Abilities; which he was daily improving by great diligence in his Study, as wisely considering, he that spends on the main stock, how large soever that may be, and does not endeavour to lay more in, will quickly come to Poverty.

He had a great Zeal against *bold Intruders into the Work of the Ministry*. And I hope you that are his People will herein resemble him; turn away from those Men, and do not so much as vouchsafe them the Hearing. These *Vermin* begin to swarm among us, and disturb us by their hideous Noise, not in *Corners or Chambers*, but in our very *Pulpits*; and are like to prove an *Egyptian Plague* to us: If these Illiterate Antinomian Usurpers are not speedily and effectually discountenanced by Ministers and People too, they who are already the Blemish of *Nonconformity*, will quickly prove the total *Ruin* of it.

He had *Luther's Three Qualifications* to make a Man a Gospel-Minister; he gave himself much to *Meditation and Prayer* to his last, that he might work things upon his own Soul, and thence more effectually convey them to yours. If Divine Truths are first *Engraven* on our Hearts, then are we most likely to *Print* them on those of our Hearers. And as for *Temptation*, he had been sorely exercised and distressed by it in his Younger days; though from that time *Satan* left him, and molested him no more in that manner.

He had a *natural Fervency* of Spirit, which made him somewhat vehement in every thing that he espoused; which Time and Experience did *correct* in some matters, making him more Calm and Moderate towards our Brethren who differ from us in things that lie *remote enough from the Foundation*.

He had a marvellous *Readiness and Quickness* in Answering any difficult Questions, as soon as ever they were Propounded to him. His Notions were *fast locked up* in a faithful Memory, but yet the door did presently *fly open at the first knock*, so as that he could easily bring them forth at pleasure.

But the Gift of *Preaching*, that most essential and useful Part of a Minister's Work, was that peculiar Talent wherewith God had Blessed and Honoured him. He opened and applied the  
great

great Truths of the Gospel; with that mixture of Plainness and Majesty, with that measure of Life and Power, that showed he had a deep sense upon his own Heart of the great Ends of the Ministry, the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Souls. His Delivery and Carriage were Graceful; his *Speech Sound*, such as could *not be Condemned*; his Sermons Warm and Serious, such as commanded Attention, raised Affection, and struck an Awe into the Consciences of those who heard them. And no wonder then he had so general an Acceptance, and so eminent Success. Many were the *Seals* of his Ministry; of *this and that man* it may be truly said, That *they were born here*.

2. Consider him *as a Christian*. He has been noted for this, that he was very ready upon all occasions to start some *holy and serious Discourse*; a thing that is grown almost out of fashion among the Professors of this Age. When we meet together, we talk of News, of worldly Affairs, it may be of the Sins and Miscarriages of our Brethren; we can spend whole Hours together, and hardly drop one word, of God, or Christ, or Heaven, all the while. But hardly any Company could he come into, but he was like an open Box of precious Ointment, he would leave some sweet Perfume, some Heavenly Discourse behind him.

His Compassion to the *Poor* was great, to whom he gave Alms, and Holy Advice at the same time; and was very liberal in both, doing Good at once to Body and Soul too.

He was a Close Walker with God, and found the fruit of it, by enjoying a constant, settled, calm Assurance of the Divine Love, for many years together; which pass'd the *trial*, and stood firm and unshaken, several times, when he verily thought himself to be near his End. When his nearest Relation express'd her great Sorrow at the Apprehensions of his Death, in a former Sickness, he replied, *Why weep you for me, who am going to the Eternal Inheritance?* And then brake forth into a large and serious Discourse of the Joys of the Saints above.

He had frequent Alarms by the Providence of God, and had a deep sense of his own Mortality thereupon. He said to a Friend a few days since, *I do not expect to live long, but I bless God I am ready*. Any one that would see his very Heart and Soul, let him read the Introduction to those useful Sermons of his about

the benefit of Affliction, Preached and Printed on the occasion of his having been twice seized with a Death-threatening Calamity.

His Patience and Resignation under Afflictions, and sharp and severe pains, was very remarkable. When, upon that occasion, a near Relation expressed too much of concernedness, as he thought, for him; His Answer was, *Submission, Submission best becomes Creatures.* And it was a frequent saying with him, *I am in the hands of my gracious God and Father, who best sees what is best for me.*

This was the *Man*, this was the *Minister*, this was the *Christian*, whom you have lost. They who saw his Face here so often, and with so much delight, shall never see it more in this place. They who heard the Voice of this Charming Preacher with so much content, shall never hear it more. He shall watch over, exhort, rebuke, guide, direct, comfort you no more. Seeing he is gone whence he shall not return, and can give you no more Advice; suffer ~~me~~ *me* to do it. And I shall speak a few things to you as a Society, and I hope my Counsel will be acceptable to you.

1. Be not too *hasty* in filling up the Breach which God has made upon you; and yet be not too *dilatory* neither.

2. Seek out a man, that comes as near as may be to your deceased Pastor, in *Doctrine, Discipline, and Ministerial Gifts*; a better Pattern I cannot propound to you. And though this be no very *easy* matter, yet I do not totally despair but such a one may in time be found out; especially if the *United Ministers* in and about this City, be applied unto, as I think *they ought to be upon such an Occasion.*

3. Till this be done, be very careful whom you admit into the *Pulpit*. 'Tis not fit that every private Brother should assume the liberty of thrusting up whom he has a mind unto. Nothing should be done of this nature, without the concurring consent of those who have had some share in the *managing the Affairs of this Society.* And if this Rule be neglected, it opens a wide Gap for Breaches and Divisions, for Confusion and every Evil work.

4. Let the Lord's Supper be kept up at its usual and stated times. The Neighbouring Pastors lawfully may administer it to you; and

and I doubt not but they will at your request. This will keep your Members from scattering, who else will be ready to run into other Folds, and may be tempted from an Occasional, to fix in a Stated Communion: And hereby no opportunity will be given to any of those People, who whether by Commission from others, or not, I list not to enquire, are turned *Privateers*, endeavouring to pick up any Rich Vessel that is separated from the rest of the Fleet.

5. Let not any of the Members of this Society, take this opportunity of leaving it. I know what the Plea of some will be, The remoteness of their Dwellings. But surely, though your Pastor be, yet your Houses I suppose are not removed, but stand still in the same place they did, and are altogether as near as formerly they were. But, whatever you may do hereafter, don't drop off now; stay till a Successor be chosen, and the Society well fixed under him; the pulling out of one or two Pins at such a time as this is, may shake and endanger the whole Building. If there be a necessity, and you must, or will be gone; be not in haste; wait but for one year, till things are settled, and then you may slide off without much Observation or Danger.

6. And Lastly, Break not into Parties and Factions: Beware of hard Speeches, unjust Surmises, secret Heart-burnings and jealousies one of another. Beware of private Cabals, and of being practised upon by any without Doors, who may have little and wicked Designs upon you, for the tearing and dividing you in pieces, and sending a Fireship in among you, in order to the scattering of you: And such there are, who, while they are at a distance, and by the Colours that they hang out one would take for Friends, but shall find them at last to be real Enemies.

Heb. 13.  
7.

I shall close all with the words of the Apostle; Remember him that had the Rule over you, that so often spake to you the word of God; whose Faith follow, considering the end of his Conversation. And consider his End aright, so that you may all fall in with the Exhortation of our Saviour in my Text, To be always ready; For the Son of man may come upon you, as he did upon him, in an hour when you think not.